

The Homesteader
and Other Poems

Alice Pyne Mc Davitt



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*The Homesteader
and Other Poems*

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By

Alice Pyne McDavitt
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NEW YORK
THE COSMOPOLITAN PRESS
1913

PS 3525
A 1925 H6
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DEC 31 1913

\$1.00

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INTRODUCTION

“Of making of books there is no end,”
In olden days was said;
Now in the oft-trod paths we wend
In the footprints of the dead.

And so I offer forth my rhymes
To wile an idle hour
In sultry Summer's sunny time
Or when storms of Winter lower.

And may they win me friends to love,
Where-ever they may go
My readers find a treasure trove
To read again—and slow.

God grant I weaken no man's creed,
May faith be brighter still,
Of darkened doubt be left no seed
To taint the human will.

The talents that we each may have
Are given of Thee,—our God,
Soon to be requited in love,
While we sleep 'neath the sod.

The Homesteader and Other Poems

THE HOMESTEADER

I

A merchant in an Eastern town,
And in the prime of life,
With a daughter fair of sweet sixteen,
And a lady for a wife.

And he was doing fairly well,
His business brought him gain;
But he dreamed forever of Western lands
And fields of golden grain.

And office and desk more hateful grew
And the city's dust and dins.
He compared them often to himself
With horses and crops and bins.

And he thought him not of the life of ease,
Fine linen, and social life;
Of servants who served and sought to please,
Of his daughter, or his wife.

Of the lonely life on the distant wilds,
Of the cabin for mansion changed,
Of toil-worn hands and care-worn face,
Or the settlers' distant range,

Of the arduous tasks that are never done,
Tho' one works from dawning gray
Through blistering heat of noonday sun
Until eve and the moon's pale rays,

And of the risks of failing crops,
And the rains that will not come,
Of the dull dumb hatred of it all
And the farmers' scanty home,

Of the bank accounts that are very rare
To be found on the yeoman's side,
Of the ashen face of the farmer's wife
Who was once a blooming bride.

He knew it not he could not toil
Who had never learned how to farm,
His hands were as white and free from soil
As his soul was free from harm.

As for horses he knew not good from bad,
But had loved them from a child;
And his youthful dreams had been often filled
With the breaking of bronchos wild.

Oh, a shining mark for sharks was he
As good as they often find.
They looked him over and winked again
And smiled to the men behind.

Who sold him teams of lean sorry skates
At prices of fabulous worth.
As he drew the reins o'er those ponies' backs
He was one of the Lords of Earth.

He hired a car and loaded it full
Till there was not room for more,
And as he bought each parcel and lot
Few knew how his hopes did soar.

He sold his business and at a loss,
But for that he did not care,
So glad was he to find himself free
For those Western lands so fair.

Oh! False is the lure of gold I'm told,
And for Love a man may die,
But the Western fever in its grip
Is worse by far, they say.

And the Western fever held its course
As he bade each friend good-bye.
With a clasp of the hand he said farewell,
And a brightening of the eye

As he asked them to come to his Western home
And partake of the settlers' fare,
And each get a homestead for himself
Ere they grew both scarce and rare.

II

The journey by rail was dull and cold,
And the horses pined and died;
And he drew them forth by the wayside grim
And buried them side by side.

Until at last only three were left
Of all he had bought in pride.
He reckoned the price he had paid for each
And he turned away and sighed.

Arrived at last at his journey's end,
Ah, 'twas then his troubles began!
Had his soul been made of baser stuff
He'd have felt himself undone.

The feed was scarce and the feed was high,
His three horses must be fed;
The inn was poor and the "grub" was worse,
And scant was the fare and bed.

Oh! prices were high in that Western town
Where every man is alive;
And each must look unto himself.
For every one must thrive.

He hied him forth to a land agent then,
Or an agent hied to him;
And a very brilliant tale was told,
And related with gust and vim.

Perhaps he failed to believe it all;
But of that I cannot record.
But his hopes once faded revived again
As the Phoenix from ashes soared.

He saw the land was fair and good,
The soil would be hard to beat,
The Winter is dry and cold, they said;
Winds lessen the Summer's heat.

He filed for a homestead ; that wasn't enough ;
He thought he would like to own
Those Western regions for miles around
And have it in Spring wheat sown.

He bought some land and bargained for more ;
And implements, horses, and cows,
And harness and lumber, all count high,
And oxen and sheep and sows.

And perhaps his judgment was just as good
As of many a city man
Who lived all his life 'mong ledgers and books
And did many a column scan.

But of farming well he didn't know much,
But he thought that he did, you see ;
And was willing to learn, if he only could,
And the farmer's life is free.

Free to toil till death doth come,
Tho' his muscles may relax ;
To till the land and sow the wheat
And barley and oats and flax.

The Summer was dry, and his crop was poor,
And his money was growing scant ;
Of provisions for Winter he had enough
And—he had never known want.

III

That Winter the settlers often say
Was the worst they ever knew;
And November's breath was icy cold
As it froze the lake and slough.

And every day grew colder still,
And the wind a cutting blast,
And the snow came down on those open plains
Till in billows high 'twas cast.

As high as the tops of the sodded shacks,
And still it fell, they say,
As tho' it never meant to quit
Till the end of the Judgment Day.

And then, alas, his wife fell ill,
And each day she seemed to fail.
"I am so tired," she often said,
"Of the snow and sleet and hail.

"And oh to be 'mong my people again,
And oh for my mother dear;
My sister's face I long to see,
But I shall be buried here.

"And oh to see the church again,
The church where we were wed.
To hear a sermon but once more."
Again and again she said.

She passed away one Winter's morn,
And seemed not loath to go.
She bade a smiling goodbye to each.
Ah, yes—it is often so.

And the heartsick fret for the absent face.
Oh, father and daughter could tell
Of the anguished and often sleepless nights.
Yet each must say, "'twas well."

With some the memories do not dull
And grow dim as the days go by:
The absent are ever in the heart,
Tho' bright the smiling eye.

Perhaps it was best that toil they must
As the Springtime came again
With the undullous Chinooks' breezes mild
And the sunshine and the rain.

And the hope that lives in the human breast
That sorrow but seldom slays,
Tho' every one of us wonders oft
At the mystery of human ways.

Now that it happened he did not care
As to crop or rain or drought.
It seemed that luck had come his way,
That fortune had sought him out.

And every venture brought success;
Then coal on his land was found,
And capital with its bustling ways
Was at work on the fields around.

And his homestead site was chosen then
For the railroad's busy town,
And never more would his oxen plow
Or his wheat again be sown.

And lots were sold and houses built,
And money came to him,
As if to comfort as best it might
The man whose eyes were dim

With the memory of the loss of her
Who had been so glad to go,
So tired was she of the dreary plains
And the hail and sleet and snow.

THE SEARCH FOR GOLD

I would tell as best it may be
The version of a miner's tale;
Tell it as he told it to me
Of his search that did not fail,

Of the mines and of the working,
Of the desert and the plain,
Of the dangers ever lurking
And the miner's thirst has slain.

And I wish I had the wording
And the genius but to write
In the English that was curdling
Of the horrors of the fight:

Of the burning of sun shining,
Of the glaring of the sand,
Of the digging without whining,
And the vale of Dead Man's Land,

Of the finding of the treasure
And the lack of water there,
Of the gold to buy him leisure
And the love of lady fair,

Of the thirst so fiercely burning
That at last his reason fled,
Of the folly of returning
Tho' his lips were parched and bled.

Return! Ah, no. Indeed, how could he
Cross that burning desert plain?
Pile the nuggets high there would he
In the sands where is no rain.

And he babbled to the lizards
Of the beauty of his love
Who had bade him brave the hazards,
Bring of gold a miser's trove.

"I will wait a life-time for you,
And will pray both day and night."
Thought he of those words so truthful
And the purpose that was right.

As he staggered with the shivers
That are not brought on by cold,
Dreamed he of the shimmering rivers;
Then he cursed the shining gold.

Ten miles back of him was water.
He would strive to reach it there
'Mid the maniac's dreadful laughter
And wild shoutings on the air.

Came across a canteen rusty,
And some ants and clothing worn,
And a skull and bare bones musty,
Tho' the flesh from them was shorn.

By the skeleton knelt he blindly,
Touched the hideous thing with care;
Soft and low he asked it kindly,
"Searched you too for gold with prayer?"

“Did a woman beg with kisses,
 Bid bring back the miner’s gold;
Did the lizards give you hisses
 As they taunted you of old?”

“Did you find the gold as I did,
 Did you seek for water here,
And from you had reason fled, too,
 Ere you sought your lonely bier?”

There the miners found him babbling,
 Talking to that awful skull,
With the maniac’s senseless gabbling,
 Thirst and hunger rendered dull.

And they carried him to shelter,
 Gave him of their tenderest care,
Food and water by the spoonful,
 For such kindness is not rare.

And his reason came back to him,
 And he told them of his find,
Found again the nuggets due him,
 And he showed the traces wind,

And the colors and the workings,
 And the mined for golden store,
And the patience of the diggings
 That of treasure would yield more.

Did he find his sweetheart faithful?
 Was she true who had sent him there?
For—sometimes—are women truthful
 But this one was only fair.

THE STORM-QUEEN

I

The spirit of the storm
Is brooding o'er the deep;
She calleth forth her minions
Who never, never sleep.
From caverns deep of oceans broad
They whispering gather round,
A ghastly throng of elfin brood
With beetling brows and ashen face.
Of serpent form and hissing voice,
They answer to the sound
Of lowering tempests' awful roar,
Of darkening clouds and waves that soar
O'er sinking ship and drowning crew,
With wailing voice that echoes,—“More,”
'Midst lashing foam they rushing seek
Some farthest shore that seas divide,
Where living men may never more
Their loved ones see again.

II

But fair as the day
Is the face of their queen,
And her eyes have the glance
Of power serene,
And her form is majestic
With light and with life,
Who rules o'er dominions
Of darkness and strife.

Her voice is as gentle
As cooing of doves
As she sings to the dying
Wild songs of dead loves,
Of hopes that are banished
With youth's vanished fires,
And riches to sate
The meanest miser's desires.

She calls to the brain
Of the wanderer grim,
Who cared nought for love
Of home or of kin;
And he thinks him again
Of the mother at home,
Who prays that kind winds
Favor those who may roam,

And places a light
In the window to guide
Those wandering footsteps
Again to her side.
Yet never, oh never,
On this earth will she see
The laddie who knelt
As a child at her knee,

And who now in the storm
Cons the prayers of his youth,
With faith he at last
Seeks the Goodness of Truth.
"Dear Father, give comfort
To those who shall weep."

He murmurs a vow
And sinks silent in sleep.

III

She sings to the saddened.
Her song is of rest
From strife and from sorrow,
From anger and woe.
She tells of a home
Where the weary are blest
Where never again
Will they find human foe.

Contented they wander
Those fair shores to find.
With dankest of seaweeds
Their bodies she winds.
And the moan of the winds!
Weary Requiem, cease,
As the aged find comfort
And Infinite Peace.

IV

But, oh, to the children
So sweet is her song!
They crowd them around her,
A worshipping throng;
And loving and gentle
And tender is she
Who leads forth the young
And the careless and free,

To the deep-grottoed niches
Of the palaces fair,
Hung round them with jewels
And pearls most rare;
And silver and gold
For a pavement they find;
Tortuous are the ways
To those grottoes that wind.

And never again
May they find their path hence;
And she whispers a lullaby
Softly and slow,
As a mother who loves them
She croons to them low.
They sleep there as calmly
As children at home;
Forever is vanished
The lost wish to roam.

V

Earth's Empires change
And may crumble away,
And kings come and go
That others may sway
And rule for their hour
Of pitiful might
Ere forth they must venture
To the grave's silent night.

But here is no change.
Tho' centuries pass,
The grottoes of ocean

Their Requiems ring,
And ever the spirit
 Of storms wild will sing,
And then croons to the dying
 Her mad changeful lays
Till Eternity's Trumpet
 Sounds the ending of days.

THE HURLERS OF THE DEAD

"Have you never heard the story, then,
Of the Hurlers of the Dead?
Then glad I'll be to tell it you,"
The gardener to me said.

"T'was a windy day in Autumn,
The man was weird and old;
I've often wondered o'er it since,—
'Twas strange, the tale he told.

"In Cork my early days were spent,
Tho' Lismore 'tis my home.
This many's the year I here have worked,
And I'm now too old to roam.

"O'Driscoll is my name for sure,
And, know ye, it has been said
My father's people once were kings
And gallant soldiers led.

"And many's the bloody fray was fought
In other days I'm told,"
And bright the blue eyes flashed at me.
I smiled—the man was old.

"Are there ghosts in the tower there? you ask.
I may not tell you how,
But many the doings queer I've seen,"
And his form was trembling now.

"Full forty years ago or more
There be living still, 'tis said ;
But loath to speak are those who've seen
The Hurlers of the Dead.

"Tho' powers strange they will possess
Of maladies and ills,
And of the curious herbs to find
By many a brook and rill,

"Tho' broodings strange their faces set
In a way no man should ken,
They wander often by themselves
And sadness marks them then.

" 'Tis said they know the day they'll leave
To mingle with the dead,
And if the lad be single, sure
No lassie will with him wed.

" 'Twas coming home my mother was
From the wake of Hoolihan,
And in the graveyard that she passed
She saw the dead and ran.

"The jokes and fun and tusseling
Of those who were at play
And the ghastly faces of them all
Would fright the heart of clay.

"And the stoutest player of them all
Was the corpse they'd placed that day
Within the grave in God's own plot
All in the good old way.

“And his brother sure did keep the goal,
The living with the dead.
At that my mother rushed away
Tho’ her feet did seem like lead.

“And within a little space of time
That brother pined full soon,
And was buried there beyond the gate
Where the sun doth shine at noon.

“And sure no flowers will ever bloom,
Nor grass doth grow, ’tis said,
Where they drop their hurleys down again,
The Hurlers of the Dead.”

THE FOOTSTEP ON THE STAIR

A group of greybeards were one day
Chatting in quite an informal way.
The wine and pipe had passed along,
Enlivened with many a pleasant song.

At last the conversation lulled,
Tho' not in any sense was it dulled;
But came a pause, and then one smiled,
And told of having an hour beguiled

By a seance of mediumistic spook,
In course of which his nerves were shook,
(Yes, shaken is the proper word,
But—Euphony—must e'er be heard.)

At this the moments fast flew by
With ghastly tales of witchery;
But one there was who gloomed intent
On old memories of past sentiment.

When gay laugh broke or sally flew,
Still yet more grave and silent grew,
Until at last one smiling said
"Will you tell us why you are so sad?"

"Know you of ghostly prinktune gay?
If so, give voice and tell us, pray.
We stake our words we will not doubt
But cast incredulous thoughts to rout."

He glanced around; all pledged his tale;
But each observed he grew more pale,
But no one dreamed to hear of spirit
From such a matter-of-fact of merit.

"Well, men," he said, "I have never told,
Tho' my story is to my memory old.
Many years ago when but a lad
Just fresh from college, with verdure clad,

"I went forth with introductions sent
From friends of political influence,
And obtained, as perhaps you may have heard,
The post of envoy, an important word.

"In the course of my mission I was sent, I will
say,
To a country house in an English May.
That entrance hall I remember yet,
For I would not if I could forget.

"Yet the haunting sadness it brings to mind
Some hint of the dreary ocean's wind,
And the timid footfall on the stair
I have often heard as I listened there.

"The ancient candelabra and quaint carved chairs,
The dim old pictures of ladies fair,
And a priceless painting of 'The Flood,'
And artistic treasures of field and wood.

" 'Twas waiting as a stranger there
I first saw a vision upon the stair,—

A maiden young of sylph-like grace,
With the stately pride of a haughty race.

"And I gazed with rapture and lost my heart
To a perfect picture of perfect art,
And, strange as it may seem to you,
It was not in vain I was forced to sue.

"The happiest man in the world was I
To know that for love did 'My Lady' sigh;
Yet our love story ended like many another:
We parted in anger one from the other.

"I had vowed I would not forgive again,
For bitter was I with jealous pain.
Yet I halted a moment by the stair
Where first I had met my darling fair,

"And smiling she came and spoke to me;
But I turned away and would not see.
Thus out of her life I passed away,
Wandered over the world by a devious way.

"But at last one day I understood
The simple meaning of many a word
That had caused an estrangement of saddest
pain,
And I sought that English home again.

"There was crape on the doors and darkened stair,
And gloom and sorrow everywhere;
For the maiden I sought had passed away,
And my name was the last she spoke, they say.

"I looked at the marbled face so fair
Ere they bore her body away from where
Of all the treasures of beauteous worth
The one most perfect was consigned to earth.

"That night I lingered in that stately hall,
And alone I glanced 'round the carved wall.
Then adown that moonlit stairway came
My beautiful darling with smile the same

"As when I had gone away in scorn
On that bitter day of a long-past morn.
As I strove to clasp that form in white
Where she had been was wan pale light,

"Yet my life was lessened of its pain
As I heard that timid step again.
And every year, it has been said,
Comes ever that footfall of the dead."

DECEMBER

Sitting by the window,
List'ning to the rain,
To the patter, patter,
Of the rain against the pane.

Dreaming of the past
That to her has come again,
With its bitter sorrow,
With its joy and pain.

'Mid those mists of visions
She's a girl again,
List'ning to the dashing
Of the rain against the pane.

Dear love of days long vanished,
Come back thru the mystical gloom,
Take form 'midst the dark'ning shadows
That are thronging the silent room.

Peering thru the twilight
And the drip of rain,
Hear the beat, beat, beating
Of the storm against the pane.

List'ning for a voice
She fain would hear again,
Knowing that at last
She's waiting not in vain.

Answered is the dreamer,
She is loved again.
Death has claimed her promise
'Midst the rain against the pane.

Love has answered the heartcall,
Tho' many the years that have fled,
For thin is the veil that divideth
The living from the dead.

MYSTERY

We come, we go,
We pass upon our way.
The why we do not know,
For reason cannot say.

To see our God,
To know the Infinite,
We feel the rod;
No more is definite.

We live, we die,
And all is mystery.
To laugh, to sigh,
Is human history.

All unexplored
By any living man,
Tho' judgment soared
And logic sought to scan.

"Oh, do not dare,"
All bygone sages say,
"To venture where
Beyond—none may—

"Stand back, give o'er;
No human brain shall ken
Unnavigable shore
Of bog and fen."

No line, no word ;
Knowledge is guarded here.
The angel's flashing sword
Stops progress drear.

We shall not see,
For all is darkest night ;
The senses reeling flee
Who seeks for light.

All philosophies
Prove futile, useless, weird,—
Impenetrable awe
Rules abyss neared.

DEATH

One day, one blessed day,
A Being grand stood by me,—
A glowing, shining effulgence played
Around that form beside me.

He smiled, and gracious thoughts
Shone on that brow angelic.
Said I, "What message have you brought
From other world's symbolic?"

I paused, affrighted—majestic look
Did gleam in eyes resplendent.
I felt commensurate silence brook,
And knew 'twas death commandant.

He spoke in gentle voice and sweet,
"Come with me; I would show thee."
The sounds of rushing waters met
Did close on all around me.

We wandered where the violets bloom
By wooded slope and river.
Said he, "All this is but a tomb
Where man has slept forever."

Again our steps directed were
To forest grand primeval.
"Here warriors once and bold and sure,
Now dead to all of evil;

“And root and branch and leaves decay
Are fed by legions gory,
The grave of millions more who may
Repeat again the story.”

He stooped and lifted from the earth
Of dust a merest handful.
“This is composed of men of worth
And ambitious thoughts unboundful.

“Old Mother Earth is but the shell
To retake again the cumbers;
Demolish all who here may dwell
Of God’s created numbers.”

Again we stood a crowd among
In a city of dimensions;
The tide of commerce mighty swung
’Mid workshop and pretensions.

The motley rushing crowds surged fast
On business or on pleasure.
Only a few more years go past
And winding sheet shall measure.

“Each living form you see to-day
So strong and fair and graceful
Shall hence with me from life away
To dust of oblivion peaceful.

“I sow my seeds of swift decay
Ere babe is born of woman,
Allot the time to pass away,
Restrict the days of human.

“And death is needful to bereft,
For earth could never feed them.
If all who lived were living yet,
Why cannibals would lead them.

“And carnage, blood, and wretchedness
Would follow dark contention.
And so I come with blessedness
And grant to earth—retention.

“But lo!—the soul I cannot stay;
It returneth to Whom lent it.
I have no knowledge of the way
And know not why Who sent it.”

“And are there fairer worlds than this
Where souls may live forever,
And realize perfection’s bliss
By eternal smiling rivers?”

But he was gone, nor said again
Answer of ill or pleasure;
Yet queried I, but all in vain,
The sum of human measure.

FALSE SHEPHERDS

They ask for a million in cash
To Christianize the world,
To free with concerted dash
The heathen in darkness hurled.

To teach as they have been taught
In the colleges of to-day
The gist of the higher thought
And the trend of the newer way.

And some few there are who cherish
A reverence for olden days;
But for others ideals perish
Who are seekers of newer ways.

Sneer at Genesis of Creation
As a mythological tale,
And withhold it from the nations
Lest perchance their mission may fail.

And some would say that Jesus
Was naught but a man of clay,
And doubt the raising of Lazarus;
—Yet, doubting, they dare to pray.

And dispense a part of the Bible,
And omit a chapter and verse;
Take the miracles from the Gospels,
Teach the doubts of determinate curse.

False shepherds who lead the sheep
By the gate of destruction grim,
Do the martyrs in Heaven weep
Who were tortured and died for Him?

False teachers who teach for pay,
And seek not for guidance divine,
Deep planners for to-day
And the money to be thine.

And would teach from some other book
Of science and masterly lore,
While retaining the shepherd's crook
Consider the Bible a bore.

The danger to-day to fight
Are these wolves who devour the flock,
Whose minds rule as guides to the light,
Yet delude they to doubts that mock.

And the Church does cry to-day
To be fed of the Living Bread,
Yet must follow these rulers' sway;
Do you wonder that Faith is dead?

And the prayers of woe ascend
To the Father of tender love
That a teacher may descend
To re-gather God's flock who rove.

A SEA SHELL

Pondering o'er some bookshelf lore,
Wandering idly on the shore,
Absent glancing at the waves
As the rockbound coast they lave,

I picked up a lovely shell,
Shoreward cast by drifting swell,
And I held it to my ear,
Listened to its murmurings drear.

By the water's sounding roar
Where the fleecy cloudlets soar,
By the ocean that I love
Where for aye I'd wish to rove.

Thus the echo of the shell
Seemed a part of ocean's spell,
Pink and white, a thing of joy,
Light and wavelets' fragile toy.

And it whispered of its home,
Of the sea and of its foam,
And there echoed hints of pain,
So I tossed the shell again.

'Neath the waves it sank to rest,
Home again on ocean's breast,
And these thoughts there came to me
As the shell went back to sea:

Thou, O man, art mystery,
Part of God's eternity,
And thy hopes we may but scan
As a part of God's great plan.

And thy soul doth seek in vain
Thru an earthly life of pain,
Murmuring, searching for the way
When thy death shall end in day.

OUR GHOSTS

There are ghosts who invade our lives
The more we would fain forget,
Ghosts we meet in the busy street,
Our friends perchance or their wives.

We pause and smile and pass them by
With a word, a nod, or a pleasant smile,
Who have filled our lives with regret
And our hearts with fear and fret.

Yet our eyes still smile,
Tho' we hate meanwhile
Our ghosts whom we hasten to meet,
And pause as our ghosts we greet.

Oh, could we but cover with sods
As we bury them deep in their graves
Beneath where the waving trees nod,
Or mayhap in the dark ocean's wave.

The ghosts of our friends whom we wish to forget,
But, alas, who are living and in our paths yet.

Our ghosts whom we hasten to meet,
With smiles as our ghosts we greet,
Our friends whom once we loved as friends
But we know them as friends—no more.

THE CAUSE

As we follow the scientists' jingling maze
We trusting read what the Bible says;
Tho' we reason forever of the why and wherefore,
Sane logic still tells us there is a therefore.

As we study our earth it seems but small,
The planet perhaps that is least of all;
Then we contemplate man and his talk is grand
Of molecules and atoms and grains of sand.

The cohesive force of infinitive space,
The abysmal darkness of chaotic place;
As he pauses and tells you in learned way
A re-quote of some college professor's say

As to how chance brought the molecule *et al*,
And millions of centuries ere the atom could
crawl,
More trillions of time and emerged an ape,
Which is why some ignorant people gape.

And so again after centuries ran
The job grew perfect and at last came man,
From a skinclad savage of herbs and roots,
Until civilized at last he learns to shoot.

Tho' worshipping long moon, idols, and sun,
Now he states distinctly of Gods there are none;

Yet back of it all we are forced to see
The hand of a Great Divinity.

And it matters but little as to whether
We were formed in a week or in ages either,
But—that we live and are here to-day
Proves—beyond is God, there's no other way.

LIFE

Drifting, gliding, passing away,
A spar on the waters
I saw to-day ;
And it seemed to say
As 'twas swept along,
Now in the shadow
Again in the sun ;
Then by the waters overcast
And out of sight
It was gone at last.

I am like unto you,
Ye sons of men,
Drifting, gliding, passing away,
The whim of chance,
Swift changing play,
One moment exalted,
Then lowly again ;
But swept along
With the gliding stream
Until one day you pass along
Into Eternity.
Life is done.

REMINISCENCE

It seems to me we have lived before
Ere the dawn of earth began.
In times long past, in a far-off age,
I have known of hate and love and rage,
And have studied of problems old and sage,
Of time and eternity, chaos and calm,
And did list perchance to the angels' psalms,
As in glorious tones they did often chant,
Or tell of a lost soul's grievous plaint
Ere he found the Heaven of love and faith
And the tender Father's care.

For the haunting strains of a melody grand
That recalls a home in a distant land
Come to me oft in the silent eve,
And this earth and its sordid ways I leave
To commune with the long ago.

WRITERS AND THEIR WARES

A GAY EVENING

I would pass an evening gaily
With the minds of long ago,—
Shakespeare, Milton, Byron, Shelley,—
But I turn away from Poe.

Wordsworth, Holmes, and Blake, and Kingsley,
Proudly standing in a row;
Moore and Jonson, Burns and Dryden,
Southey, Massey, Ingelow,
Never Edgar Allan Poe.

Tennyson and Cook and Landon,
Emerson and Hemans slow,
Stately Scott and Goethe's measures,
Dana, Willis, Longfellow,

Hood and Wolfe and Barbault, too,
Croly, Bryant, Jewett, Lowell,
Whittier, Keble, and Rossetti,
Brownings, yes, and Goldsmith, too;
But never verse of Allan Poe.

With their haunting, witchlike measures
Of the bells that will not cease
In my brain they ring forever;
And "The Raven" gives no peace.

But the repetition soundeth
Ever, ever, ever-more,
Till I wish that Raven never
Never, never, any more.

On that bust of Pallas ever
Just above the chamber door
Still would sound forever, ever,
Ever, ever, ever-more.
Percival, Halleck, and Taylor,
But I turn away from Poe.

THE TOP

“There is always room at the top.”
In silence she pondered the thought,
With dreams of girlish fancies
How she might clamber aloft.

When to the top she'd striven
Then the full meaning came home,
Lovelorn and friendless she stood there,
Away at the top,—Alone.

THE NOVELIST

She read for pleasure,
And from all books,
As one might judge
By her studious looks.

She dreamed to compose
A tale herself
That by good luck
Might sell itself.

She wrote of lands
She had never seen,—
A far too common
Practice, it seems.

She told of times
She knew not of;
And wise ones read
But forgot to scoff.

The plot was sane,
Nor filled with sin;
No runaway wife
Lurked there within.

Her story is read
And bound to sell,
For honest folks
Love morals well.

THE MASTERPIECE

"The poem's well done,
With careful plan,
And lofty purpose,"
Said the college man.

"It is sweetly grand,
Such a charming air,
With pensive aspect,"
Said "My Lady" fair.

"The study of weeks
By midnight oil,
Each word's well turned,"
Said her dear friends all.

Sweeping the floor,
No thought of fame,
When into her mind
That sonnet came.

She dropt her broom
And wrote away,
And that is how
Fame came that day.

THE VERSE WRITER

The editor sat in his sanctum
And read the verses in haste,
He quickly scanned each sentence,
For he had no time to waste.

He found as the day passed over
They still in his brain took room;
And he sang the halting measures
To a quickly improvised tune.

And a master heard the music
As he halted by the door,
And he brought forth the beauty and rhythm
That no one had seen before.

And then came fame, and fortune,
And laurels fell at his feet;
Yet he failed to think of the writer
Who had dreamed of that song complete.

THE SERPENT'S PEN

He is not kind, he is not wise,
The poet in a serpent's guise,
With vaunting talk and slandering tongue,
Who walks the ways of men among.

With hissing voice and subtle way
A woman's fame he seeks to slay;
Condemns the good, convicts the fair,
And in disguise he seeks to snare.

In justice' name we set him forth,
Let him be known both North and South,
A man,—to write of shrugs and things,
Told of in hints and whisperings.

To prate of woman's fame in rhyme
Stamps such a man and for all time.
No talk of just and goodly pride
Can gloss the cad who would deride.

Who speaks of chat as favored guest
With gloating pride's expanding chest,
Leads us to think of slighting words,
Perhaps by other friends o'erheard.

Of poison tongue and angry way,
In garb of lamb who seeks to slay,
Go forth despised, condemned of men,
The poet with the serpent's pen.

To think that works like his will sell,—
For by his ad he is known well,—
That verse like his can move the mart,—
And even by some be classed as art,—

This lessening of a woman's fame,
This darkening of a mother's name.

We all have quoted, seen, or heard,
And surely know each well-placed word.
By William Watson was it penned,
And so *none* may dare to defend.

When first we conned of serpent's tongue
We thought of themes he might save sung;
With brilliant intellect and wise,
He might have chosen a kinder guise.

But then again consider well
Of slanderous tongues with his from h—l.
When envy seeks her to abuse,
And Satan aids her tongue to loose.

We all have heard of lives most fair,
Whose names were blackened by the snare,
And those with sainted purpose oft
Have proved the target of the scoff.

I know not heroine of the tongue
Of whom the poet Watson sung,
But if she wields a tongue of sorrow
None ought for her to trouble borrow.

Watson's poems may live for aye;
Go read his stanzas now to-day.
"The Ode to Shelley" will excite your wonder,
"Lachrymae Musarum" ponder.

MY CASTLE IN SPAIN

Oh, you ought not to give such a stare of surprise
With incredulous questioning glance of the eyes,
And smile at my house of prosaic gray,
With crudest of furnishings far from gay.
And no wellkept lawn of emerald green
Interspersed with flowerbeds spaced between.
No stately driveway do you discern,
Yet you look as if you would like to learn,
And your search for news will not be in vain,
For to-day I shall tell you of my castle in Spain.

It is not always I can find the way,
Or may borrow the keys of the guardian fay,
And it's then when tired I only weep
Till discouragement drives me away to sleep.
But sometimes it happens when I feel most blue,
Because of sorrow the same as you,
Why, then in a trice I am up and away,
And there for golden hours I stay.
I wander so haply up many a stair
That leads to the treasures of my castle most fair.

Oh, the glorious rooms so wide and grand,
And for leagues around I own the land.
No sordid bothers can follow one where
For a few short hours I am happy there.
Oh, the hangings are made of silks of cost
(The bills for which have long been lost),
The rugs are Turkish, rare works of art,

Their equals are seen in no earthly mart.
But of all the riches most valued to me
Are my treasure ships sailing over the sea.

I have watched their coming for many a day,
Across the ocean and safe in the bay.
"And what do their cargoes consist of?" you smile.
(Dear me, what a practical question of guile.)
If you do not watch out, you will render in vain
A perfect description of my castle in Spain.
They are loaded with fancies that dreams are made
of,
And when they hear this no writers will scoff;
Many wonderful, beautiful thoughts come to me
From my golden treasure ships over the sea.

The plots of the books I shall publish some day
And of how all will read them,—some will, any-
way,—

Sweet, filmy pale fancies of poems most rare
Dissolve there before me upon the thin air.
You cannot conceive of the treasures of worth,
Roseate, multi-colored, no mere visions of earth.
And most welcome are you to your gold and its
care,

I want but my dream-jewels so glittering fair.
For perfect contentment I seek not in vain
When alone with my genii in the castle of Spain.

Your cold sneer reminds me of some dreary times
When weary and sad I seek other climes.
For there are but fragments all tattered and torn,
Gray ashes of dreams that are most forlorn,
And minute bells booming from over the sea

Tell of ships that are lost forever to me,
And of hopes that are vanished or buried away
Where comfort can never give forth faintest ray;
But still is one rainbow fair arched I do see
When my castle in Spain will come back to me.

THE MEED

Scant the meed—his published sonnets
Held an honored scholar's place,
And his health and life had suffered
O'er those lines of polished grace.

And came love and marriage to him,
Children, poverty, and cares,
Toil and hardship's awful furnace,
Yet he offered dainty wares.

And unheeding were the rabble,
And unnoticed were the songs,
Save by some and men of letters,
Treasured gems of thought among.

But he wrote for love of writing,
And one day the pen was stilled
With the magic of the genius,
By the wand of death distilled.

Ah! Now comes the praise of thousands,
Homage offered at his bier,
But no smile his features softened
Who had passed unheeded here.

POETRY

A poet is born, not made
By rules of men's devising.
To his soul the metre is said,
And he sings by improvising.

Pray, who would teach the lark
As he trills his roundelay?
To his music you gladly hark
As he brightens the early day.

Oh! a scholar may write a poem
More learned than a Burns,
But no heart will give it a home,
And none to the reading returns.

And when the spirit says, "Write,"
The words will come at a thought;
As the glories that are given to sight
They are seen and no need to be sought.

THE DREAMER

Three angels bent o'er a crib one day
Where smiling in sleep a baby lay
 In a hovel old and poor.
The roof unthatched, the glass was gone
From the window-frame all broken down;
Yet o'er the child the sunlight streamed
As he lay content and sweetly dreamed,
 While death the mother bore
 To the land where toil is o'er.

“Hard to bear is the lot that’s given.
Kind sister, take the babe to heaven,”
 The angel of life did pray.
“Nay, I shall come when the Master sends,”
And upward at the call of love she wends.
But genius paused with wondrous gleam
And she gave to the child the gift to dream
 And talents of words that may
 Lure men to a better way.

FAME

I have planned and hoped,
Have prayed and striven,
Have rejoiced and moped,
Have seized and riven.

I have dared and reached,
And have trampled down,
Who was oft discouraged
When luck had flown.

Believe me, the goal
Once gained will cloy;
'Tis but the toll
To fame's alloy.

THE EPITOME

What does it all amount to, pray?—
Our pitiful labor from day to day,
Our wearisome toil from the dawn of the sun
Until evening comes and our work is done,
And folded hands on our bosom cross,
Done with the gain—and done with the loss.

What matters it whether our path be rough,
If we meet with kindness or with rebuff,
Tho' the sunshine over our lives may play
Or storms may threaten and mar the way?
Tho' our lifelong journey be ever so steep
Our eyelids closed will no longer weep.

What does it matter what fame we win,
And what, tho' the temple may usher us in,
If envy doth blacken our efforts vain,
Or praise and honor may keep from stain?
The laurels will fade and the crown will drop
When Death doth our earthly progress stop.

It matters not if a friend may sigh,
Or careless pass our lifework by,
Or if a storied urn may tell
The tale of our years and tell it well.
From struggles and efforts we'll be at rest,
From hope and anguish, and—it is best.

It amounts to nothing, if misunderstood,
And warped and twisted be every word.
Tho' the friend we trusted was false or true,
And instead of triumph we drank but rue.
Our sorrow and joy will soon be past,
And evening comes, and sleep—at last.

AS TO TROUBLES

If troubles you have, keep them close to yourself.
Don't constantly lay them away on a shelf,
To bring them to view again next day,
To depress poor unfortunate souls who pray
Their grievous trials may not drive them mad.
Yet you force them to hear your history sad.
Do try to-day for once to be glad,
And count and recount the joys you have had.

If aches and ill health are bothering you,
Chronic dyspepsia haunts your neighbor, too;
And none are exempted from painful ills
Until death has exacted his last due bills.
If you cannot be gay, why, smile anyway,
And think of some cheering thing to say
To dispel of gloom some faintest ray
And bring quaint brightness to the day.

As you con and recon your pitiful tale
Remember to others your woes grow stale.
They will weary of you and your sorrows, too,
And your doleful company soon eschew.
Consider how lightly you esteem their bothers,
How scant is your courtesy for woes of others.
Now pause and be honest and dare to say
That of little account are you to-day.

And how small and mean were your noblest
thoughts

And the wrong and havoc that you have wrought.
What kindly act did you ever do?
Who for noble deed could remember you?
What saintly sacrifice for a friend
That was not intended to gain some end?
What struggling soul thru you has thrived?
Whose life is the better that you have lived?

Seek a way to do some good to your neighbor.
Observe how his shoulders are bent from labor.
Be kind to the children, God's helpless poor;
You may find a mission not far from your door.
Your hours for work are becoming few;
Go into the vineyard; there is need of you.
As the evening comes to each well-filled day
You will find glad peace as you kneel to pray.

REALITY

She had worshipped, oh, how madly!
Divinely he loved and well.
But to wed she dreamed of sadly,
For marriage is love's death knell.

Ah, trysts of hopes divine
And ecstasies wild of yore
To matrimony resign,
For worship will come no more.

To bear, to suffer, to rear
'Mid anguish and thru pain,
With meek humility's prayer,
And know that self is slain.

A life prosaic and gray,
Devoid of all romance,
Divested eternally
Of word or look or glance.

To eat, to cook, to live
Forever and for aye;
To work, to toil, to thrive
Till death doth take away.

NO MORE SEA

Deep sadness comes o'er me
When stated I see
Holy words saying plainly
There shall be no more sea.
Oh, ocean, I love thee
Both wildly and well,
Far dearer than earth
With mountain and dell.

So grand in thy moods
They answer to me.
Each thought, every interest,
Seems known to thee.
Thy waves and thy anger
Now majestically frown,
Then smoother than crystal
And thy temper is flown.

Yet listen the murmur
That soothingly sounds
And tells of the vigilance
Of eternal rounds,
Thy indulgence of motion
That's never at rest
But changes with winds
Whether east or from west.

From north or from south,
Wheresoever they blow,

They find there their echo,
If violent or slow.
Thou wilt lash thee to fury
Till thy storm it is spent,
And torn is the rigging,
And tattered and bent

Are the vessels that floated
So proud on thy breast.
The fragments are scattered
And their crews are at rest,
And deep in thy depths
Are millions of bones.
Oh, hark to the triumph
That tells in thy tones!

And oft as I linger
Alone by thy side
I am told that my grave
Will be thy waters wide.
And I ask for no other,
No winding sheet white,
But the depths of thy billows,
Far, far from the light.

No deathbed where gathers
The damp on my brow,
No mourners to grieve me
With words faint and low,
No shelter where sickness
Will linger by me
Until helpless and weary
I long but to flee.

No racking of pain
 Until brain reels to sleep,
And no one, oh, no one
 To linger and weep.
Sad ocean, I love thee.
 Thy moods are my joys,—
To watch thee despising
 Vain earth and its toys.

The foam on thy billows
 With white capping crest,
As down sinks the sun
 Far away in the west.
And some time it shall be,—
 Of this, I am sure,—
My rest will be with thee
 For time evermore.

And my bones shall whiten
 And glisten some day
Deep down in thy cavernous
 Fissures of clay.
And there shall they linger
 In thy darkened bed
Till the Almighty shall render,
 Sea give up thy dead.

And rolled up as a scroll
 Shall the firmament be,
And never again
 Shall there be any sea.
And assembled and clothed
 In their flesh they shall stand,

The drowned who for ages
Have slept in thy sand.

And there the Great Judge
Shall they gather before,
Tho' for centuries dreamed they
Thy waves beating o'er.
And among them shall I be,
Thou dost murmuring say,
Tho' smiling and calm
Are thy waters to-day.

HOMEWARD BOUND

A sea as smooth as placid lake,
A sky of fairest blue,
A sun of clearest shining rays,
And a staunch ship, tried and true.

There is perhaps no better place
Where one so quickly learns
To know the other passing well,
And love from friendship turns.

As there alone upon the deep
We meet as strangers there,
And even before the day is done
We each our joys may share.

With jest and song and laughter
The days were passing by,
And now the thought of home at hand
Came to each brightening eye.

And love called for a last caress,
And kisses fond were given,
And vows of troth eternal passed
To be by distance riven.

And then a passing cloud there came,
Changed to the tempest's roar;
And ocean's billows reared aloft,
Like mountains seemed to soar.

Down in the trough that vessel sank,
It rose and sank again;
Captain and sailor at his post
Did fight that raging main.

Then came the cry, from whence none knew,
And every face blanched white.
"The ship's on fire," "The ship's on fire."
Our doom is sealed this night.

And to the sea whom all had feared,
Shrunk from in horror fierce,
Full many a frenzied soul leaped forth,
With prayers that seemed to pierce

The very vault of heaven's dome
That hung, a blackening pall,
O'er all that freight of human life;
And thus death came for all.

But not one sank beneath the waves
But prayed the Father's care.
The arm of flesh had failed them then,
And life and love are fair.

But He whose ways we may not know,
Who watches over all,
Has gathered each unto Himself.
He heard His children's call.

A MILLIONAIRE

A very great man has died to-day,
A mortal worth millions has passed away,
A personage unique of finance great,
An important figure, but Death failed to wait.
Skilful physicians tried all their art
For weakened arteries of the heart.
A heart, did you say? Why, had he one?
There are those to declare that he had none.
But be that as it may, he has passed away,
A very great man has died to-day.

Oh, his home was built on a fashionable square,
Where there was ever the purest of air.
And his house was the costliest of them all;
Yet the palsy of death did crawl
Around the doorway and thru the hall,
Nor paused he from pity to enter at all.
Some say that more cruel than death was he,
The man whom death to-day set free
From the deed of mercy, the thought of grace,
Forever from the power of the rich man's place.

A patron of costly art was he,
Famed pictures worth fortunes you may see
In golden frames on his walls to-day,
All subjects and varied, both grave and gay,
And some of course were imported from France,
Among them quaint gems of salon and dance,
And another, an Italian design of the devil,

Was most surely conceived by some son of evil.
Oh, a lover of artistic sense was he,
And millions for paintings of merit gave he.

A funeral casket of fabulous worth
Will consign his mortal remains to earth,
And columns of newspaper notices say
That a king of finance has passed away,
With a lengthy list of his wealth as well,
And of what he bequeathed to charity tell.
Charity? What, did he know the word?
For never before did he give, we have heard.
The cries of the needy, the orphan's prayers,
Too intent on his millions to heed their cares.

It has been related by those who know
That along death's pathway he feared to go.
He pleadingly offered a wonderful price,
If the surgeons would save him by some device.
Oh, yes, he had need of saving, they say,—
This once powerful rich man who died to-day.
A cold, hard man with his soul on gain
And never a thought for poverty's pain.
A man worth millions has died, they say,
While millions are starving in the world to-day.

THE PROMISE

Your hands were dimpled soft and white
When first I met you, love.
For labor's task they seemed too slight.
I begged that I might have the right
To be for life your guardian knight.

Your faded face deep lines doth wear,
Your eyes are dim from tears,
Your form is bent from anxious cares,
Your hands the marks of toil do bear;
Yet you to me are now more fair.

I promised you a life of ease
When first I met you, love.
You've toiled for me and sought to please,
And to fresh hope oft gave the lease.
Not while life lasts will my love cease,
And I have given you love.

THE ABSENT ONES

I received a letter from you to-day,
A girlhood's friend who lives far away,
One whom I loved long years ago,
But absence makes memory's heart beat slow.

You tell me your baby boy has died,
And you write to me, from the distance wide,
That I should cheer you as best I may,
Altho' I have lost no child, you say.

Ah, no. Thank God, they are living yet.
Not for their death are my eyelids wet,
But distance divides them away from me,
One out in the west and another at sea.

And my fairest, my darling, is gone from me,
Across the ocean and far away;
Yet as none have died I'm not lonely, you say;
'Tis but as it should be, their being away.

And sometime they'll return for an hour or so.
Ah, me, is that all the comfort you know?
Is that all the solace your grief has taught,—
And that but the depth that death has wrought.

I fear me but shallow is your deepest thought,
Your friendship not such that I should have sought.
But believe me, I'll drop many tears for you,—
For you and the death of your baby, too.

For I know that your heart is sore to-day
From sorrow that your child is laid away.
May you think as you close your eyes to sleep
Of the absent children for whom mothers weep.

After the first depth of your grief has flown,
When the flowers bloom from the seed you've sown
On the tiny grave of your baby boy
Who with witching ways was your constant joy.

When you think of your heaven and him at rest,
And that soon you may see him among the blest,
Consider the parents who are praying to-day
For their wandering children so far away.

And fear they may travel the path of wrong,
With youth's heedless laugh and careless song,
And that each hour they are farther away
From the precepts and guide of their childhood day.

And know, tho' your pillow is wet from tears,
In the world are mothers who have wept for years.
As you slumber so sweetly until daylight comes,
With no anguished dreams of those who roam,

May your life bring no deeper sorrow, I pray,
Than the death of your child who is safe to-day.
Then pray as you close your eyes to sleep
For the many children for whom mothers weep.

GOOD-BYE

Good-bye, my readers one and all,
And may you each some time recall
A sentiment or line or verse,
Perchance some thought again rehearse.

And brighter may life's outlook be
Because of poem composed by me;
And if you differ from my view,
Indulgence then I crave of you.

Remembering that what doth suit one
Your neighbor's fancy oft-times spurns,
And that what pleases at one time
At another proves but spurious rhyme.

These poems were the toil of years,
And contain perchance some hint of tears.
May you with interest con each lay,
And so again I bid—Good Day.

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